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SUBJECT Interview with Stanislas Levchenko

BILL KURTIS: We have seen some chilling headlines in the last couple of weeks about three members of an American family, all charged with selling military secrets to the Russians. How does the Kremlin do it?

We've asked two espionage experts to share some secrets of the spy recruitment business. Stanislas Levchenko used to do his spy work for the KGB before his defection. He has asked to be shown only in silhouette this morning. And John Barron, senior editor of Reader's Digest magazine, who has written extensively on the spy trade. Both gentlemen are in our Washington studio.

Mr. Barron, we can see you a little better this morning, so let's start with you. Just how does this recruitment take place? How can someone talk an American into spying for the KGB?

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JOHN BARRON: Well, within the United States the KGB maintains a large number of professional intelligence officers who themselves, and through agents, continuously are searching for Americans suffering from some character defect or personality deformity that may be exploited to suborn them into treason.

KURTIS: How about money?

BARRON: Money certainly is a considerable motivator in the cases that we have known about.

KURTIS: I saw MICE. What does MICE mean? Money, ideology, compromise and ego. I guess I know what it means, but maybe you could elaborate on that a moment.

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BARRON: In attempting to subvert someone, the KGB officer will endeavor to play upon one or more of these motives: a desire for money, an ideological attraction, a compromise which makes the subject vulnerable to manipulation. Ego, the desire of someone to be an actor on the world stage.

Typically, as I think Stan will confirm, once someone is lured across the threshold, then the KGB will endeavor to bring all of these motivations into play.

KURTIS: Mr. Levchenko, are Americans, let's say, more vulnerable on ideology than the other three?

STANISLAS LEVCHENKO: I do not think that in most of the countries of the world the KGB utilizes the ideological closeness as the major factor for recruitment. It's usually anything else. You know, money increasingly plays more and more role in recruiting citizens of not only the United States but in most of other countries in the world. In Japan, for instance. And a variety of other factors.

Actually, KGB is known as a very patient organization which spends sometimes a year, two, three, up to five years on recruitment of one agent, and then they start really operating with full speed.

However, when money is the motivating factor, sometimes recruitment could be made within literally a few days. I knew personally a few cases when people were really bought without any relations to any ideology. Actually, I knew a few cases when people were bought when being quite quite staunch anti-Soviets.

KURTIS: How much money did it take?

LEVCHENKO: KGB represents superpower which has certain troubles with foreign currency, but not in intelligence business. The KGB gets all the money it needs. So it can be anything from $1000 a month to, I don't know, 20-50 thousand dollars a year. I mean globally.

KURTIS: How do you make that first contact?

LEVCHENKO: First contact is being done usually when KGB has some information that a certain person started to have or has certain vulnerabilities. And when such information is obtained from people who know him or through some rumors or through newspaper articles or through different, quote-unquote, books, or otherwise -- it is a relatively rare case when KGB just comes out of blue and immediately within the first five minutes tries to recruit somebody.

KURTIS: It tries to pop the question.

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Mr. Barron, do you think some of these people actually realize that they are spying for the KGB, or do they think they're falling short of that?

BARRON: There certainly are cases wherein the KGB has lured people into espionage without their realizing that they are assisting the Soviets. But in general, I think -- and I believe Stan would confirm -- that the individual usually knows what he's doing.

KURTIS: Is there as much recruitment by the United States as there is by the KGB?

BARRON: I don't think, if you're speaking of the Soviet Union, that the United States or any other Western power has the liberty that the Soviet Union enjoys here. I would say there's an old Russian proverb which Lenin liked to quote. It says, "When given grasp, then beat and run fast." When we grant the Soviet Union and its satellites the opportunity to station in our midst hundreds of professional intelligence officers, we can only expect to see results such as we've seen in the Walker case year after year.

KURTIS: Well, Mr. Levchenko, finally, is one of the ways to fight this to deny the access of these Russians and KGB agents entry to the United States?

LEVCHENKO: Yeah. In my opinion, it is one of the ways. But at the same time, I think there is a powerful -- another powerful way to counter those recruitment activities by giving people a chance to be aware of what exactly KGB and Soviet military intelligence service, GRU, does in the United States and in other countries: what kind of cases they have, how many people they manage to recruit. And what is most important, the details of such cases, how people got themselves lured into espionage activity.

KURTIS: So talking about it pubicly does have some positive effect, then.

LEVCHENKO: Yes. I'm pretty sure of that.

KURTIS: Well, thank you....

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